



Rural-urban perspectives on impoverishment risks in development-induced involuntary resettlement in Bangladesh



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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on an investigation of relocation behavior in households affected by development-induced involuntary resettlement (Road Network Improvement and Maintenance Project II, RNIMP-II) in Chittagong–Dohazari area, Bangladesh; the potential influence of resettlement on intensity of impoverishment risks related to rural and urban contexts is examined. Analysis of pre-resettlement questionnaire survey data (n = 199) revealed many affected households in rural areas intended to migrate to urban areas, and showed that potential rural–urban migrants may face intensified impoverishment risks of landlessness, homelessness, and increased morbidity compared to potential urban–urban and rural–rural resettlers. There were significant differences between potential rural–urban migrants and other groups in income levels, cash compensation amounts, evaluation of social welfare programs, and psychological status (place attachment and subjective well-being). Results suggest relocation behavior may differentiate intensity of impoverishment risks. Careful assessment and program design is essential for restoring social, economic, and psychological losses of affected people in development-induced involuntary resettlement.

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1. Introduction

To satisfy growing energy and transportation demands associated with drastic economic growth, development projects such as highways and dams have been widely implemented in developing countries in order to create better civil infrastructure. Many such projects require land acquisition and involuntary resettlement of local populations in areas slated for construction. Over the last 20 years, 250–300 million people worldwide have been displaced due to development and related issues, and many of these persons have been marginalized and left without sufficient compensation or access to restoration measures (ADB, 2006; Modi, 2009). Such development-induced involuntary resettlement has increasingly created serious social, economic, ethical, and political problems in many countries, and thus development agencies as well as international donors have become extremely concerned with these issues (ADB, 2006; World Bank, 2001; World Commission on Dams, 2000).

Involuntary resettlement induces not only land loss but also

creates various risks for affected residents. The Impoverishment Risks and Reconstruction (IRR) Model (Cernea & McDowell, 2000; Cernea, 1997) has been widely adopted in discussions of the challenges inherent in involuntary resettlement, as this model highlights risks displaced persons face along with involuntary resettlement, and also suggests ways to alleviate these risks. In this model, Cernea identified nine potential risks that are interdependently involved in displacement: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common property resources, education loss, and social disarticulation (Cernea & McDowell, 2000; Cernea, 2000). Among these risks, reconstruction measures for landlessness and joblessness have had the greatest impact in restoring the lives of displaced people since finding housing and employment as well as securing property are crucial to reconstruction and the reduction of other impoverishment risks (Dickinson & Webber, 2007; Quetulio-Navarra, Niehof, Van der Horst, & van der Vaart, 2014). At the same time, impoverishment risks relate to welfare aspects of displacement, including psychological well-being. Education and health status can synergize both positively and negatively with livelihood restoration, but this is often neglected in involuntary resettlement. The risk of homelessness is closely related to (the loss

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of) a sense of attachment to the original location, and in many cases this is not taken into account as a part of compensation or restoration in resettlement procedures (Cernea, 1997). Moreover, taking into consideration the potentially wide-ranging impacts of impoverishment risks, outcomes of involuntary resettlement should be evaluated based on satisfaction among affected people and their quality of life after relocation rather than the receipt of legally required compensation (Cernea & McDowell, 2000; Fujikura & Nakayama, 2013).

Landlessness, joblessness, and other impoverishment risks are commonly observed in many development-induced involuntary resettlement projects, but the sensitivity to risk impacts can vary among both households and development projects (Cernea & McDowell, 2000; Quetulio-Navarra et al., 2014). Additionally, risk impacts are often unexpected by affected people, and this particularly applies when persons migrate to new areas that may have social, economic, and cultural conditions different to those in the areas in which these people had previously resided. Involuntary resettlement can facilitate migration from rural areas to urban areas, as in general, when compared to rural areas, urban areas offer more occupational and educational opportunities. However, residing in urban areas often requires increased costs of living, particularly in housing, and induces social and economic insecurity. In this regard, rural–urban migration as a result of displacement may relate to an increased sensitivity about impoverishment risks. Impacts of rural–urban migration on the quality of life of displaced people as well as mitigation measures aimed at improving the lives of these migrants thus need to be carefully considered based on the characteristics of those affected and site-specific socio-economic situations.

1.1. Development-induced resettlement in Bangladesh and its implications for rural–urban migration

As in many other countries, there has been rapid urbanization in Bangladesh during the last few decades; it has experienced constant population growth at an annual rate of 1.4% over the last decade, which has expanded the national population from 124 million (2001) to 142 million (2011) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Since the 1960s, the population has shown remarkable and consistent growth in urban centers such as Dhaka and Chittagong as a result of rural–urban migration (Khan, 1982). An empirical survey found the major driving forces for in-migration to urban areas in Bangladesh are economic, such as availability of jobs, including those in informal sectors, and better opportunities in commercially central locations (Ishtiaque & Ullah, 2013). As a result of skewed population and economic activities in urban areas, socio-economic disparities between rural and urban areas, as well as an increased income gap between the rich and poor within urban centers, have long been important policy issues in Bangladesh (Afsar, 1999).

As in many other developing countries, development-induced involuntary resettlement is common in Bangladesh. Since independence in 1971, infrastructure development projects in the country have affected 50,000 individuals annually, and these projects have resulted in the acquisition of a rough total 7000 ha between 1994 and 2004 (Khatun, 2009). However, land acquisition and involuntary resettlement are increasingly social and political issues in Bangladesh, as can be seen by the prominence of recent civic protests (Barisal Correspondent, 2013). Moreover, these factors are exacerbated because of high population density and land scarcity in the country.

Major development-induced involuntary resettlement operations in Bangladesh include Jamuna Multi-Purpose Bridge Project (JMPP) (completed in 2000), requiring the acquisition of 2900 ha of

land and affecting 105,000 individuals, and Bhairab Bridge Project (BBP) (completed in 2004), which needed 17 ha of land and affected 4000 individuals. The relocation during the JMPP, which was the largest land acquisition case in recent infrastructure development in Bangladesh, was primarily completed within rural settings and included community relocation with civic facilities as well as livelihood restoration programs (Khatun, 2009). The resettlement in the BBP was relatively small-scale compared to other recent development projects in the country; however, this process was unique as it was implemented in semi-urban settings. The resettlement package for BBP incorporated the reconstruction of commercial plots and livelihood restoration, including employment in the development project. These cases can be considered as successful in that they provided rehabilitation activities for affected people after relocation. However, many other development-induced involuntary resettlement operations in Bangladesh centralized the focus on legally required cash compensation and guidelines from external funding agencies, and they lacked emphasis on relocation and rehabilitation programs such as community reconstruction and livelihood restoration (Khatun, 2009; Zaman, 1996).

The Road Network Improvement and Maintenance Project II (RNIMP-II), loan provision for which was completed in 2014 funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), was one of several recent major infrastructure development projects in Bangladesh; its purpose was to improve transport efficiency and strengthen integrated road networks through the construction and maintenance of regional and district road connections. It affected a large number of residents (19,166 people) in different parts of the country, covering both urban and rural areas (ADB, 2014; Ministry of Communications Roads and Highways Department, 2008). Of the four contract packages (No.1–4), the Chittagong contract (No.4) is notable for the context of its population. Here, the Chittagong Zila (district), which was covered in the Chittagong contract, is the most populous among the project areas; it has a population of 7.5 million and is second biggest population center in the country after the capital Dhaka (11.88 million). Chittagong also has the highest population growth among the project areas, with the second highest population growth rate (1.7%) in the country after the Dhaka Zila (1.8%) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011; Ministry of Communications Roads and Highways Department, 2008). The relatively high population density in this area (1421 persons per km² compared to the national average 964) along with its status as a major commercial center in southern Bangladesh indicates growing urbanization and population mobility across and within the district. These factors may influence relocation behavior of affected households and sensitivity to impoverishment risks inherent in involuntary resettlement. That is, migration from rural areas to semi-urban and urban areas may be facilitated as a result of displacement from the original locations resulting in what can be seen as forced opportunities to seek *better* places to live. Also, because of the existing socio-economic disparities between urban and rural areas, these semi-urban and urban migrants from rural areas relocated by involuntary resettlement may face intensified risk of impoverishment compared to those who remain in their original locations.

1.2. Objectives

Two aims of the present study were to identify relocation intentions of affected households after displacement, with a focus on urban and rural disparities, and to clarify potential intensified impoverishment risks on rural–urban migration as a result of development-induced involuntary resettlement in Bangladesh. The present study examined two hypotheses: (1) a larger number of

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